

Gulf of Alaska Plan Team Minutes

The meeting of the Gulf of Alaska groundfish Plan Team convened on September 18th, 2009 at 1pm at the Alaska Fishery Science Center, Seattle, WA. Members of the GOA Plan Team in attendance included:

Jim Ianelli	NOAA AFSC REFM (GOA co-chair)
Diana Stram	NPFMC (GOA co-chair)
Sandra Lowe	NOAA AFSC REFM
Jeff Fujioka	NOAA AFSC ABL
Jon Heifetz	NOAA AFSC ABL
Nancy Friday	NOAA AFSC NMML
Cleo Brylinsky	ADF&G
Tom Pearson	NOAA AKRO
Mike Dalton	NOAA AFSC REFM
Leslie Slater	USFWS
Paul Spencer	NOAA AFSC REFM
Sarah Gaichas	NOAA AFSC REFM

Team members Ken Goldman (ADF&G), and Nick Sagalkin (ADF&G) were absent. Henry Cheng attended the BSAI meeting. Approximately 10 state and agency staff and members of the public also attended. Names of attendees are included in the Joint Plan Team minutes. The agenda for the meeting is attached to the joint Plan Team minutes. No changes were noted to the agenda.

GOA Pollock EIT survey results

Mike Guttormsen provided an overview of the winter EIT survey results. The Shumagins were surveyed in mid February, followed by Sanak Trough and the shelf break south of Unimak and Unalaska Islands. Large concentrations of age-1's were found in Shumagin Trough, with age 2's and 3's mixed with adults dominating off Renshaw Point and elsewhere in the Shumagins. Tom Pearson noted the Shumagin fleet, which typically operates off of Renshaw Point, took slightly longer to catch their quota this year. Pollock from the 1999 and 2000 year classes dominated in Sanak but were mostly absent from the Shumagins. The high percentage of spent fish for Sanak indicated that peak spawning had already occurred. Martin Dorn plans a co-operative survey in Sanak Trough next January. No pollock were found along the shelf break

Very few pollock were detected along the Chirikof shelfbreak. Shelikof was dominated by 2-year old fish (2007 year class), with the remaining fish primarily age-5. Dense concentrations of 35-40 cm pollock were found in Marmot Bay to the northwest of Spruce Island, which was consistent with results from a survey conducted there 2 years earlier, during which dense concentrations of 2-year olds were detected. Patchy concentrations of adult fish were located in Spruce Gully along the canyon edges.

The overall survey biomass increased from 2008, which is consistent with both the 2009 bottom trawl results and the 2008 model predictions for 2009. All results this year are from the *Oscar Dyson*. These results are uncorrected for vessel effect between the *Miller Freeman* and *Oscar Dyson* (this will be done within the assessment model).

Additional future survey effort will include the following:

- 2010 Shumagin/Sanak: Prince William Sound
- 2010 Shelikof/Chirikof: Marmot Bay and Kenai Peninsula Bays
- 2011 GOA-2 month summer survey from 170EW to Yakutat.

Julie Bonney noted that Kenai fishing typically occurs during roe season and that this should be taken into consideration in the timing of the proposed survey. She suggested looking at historical catches to estimate the best timing for this survey, but this may not be possible because of vessel allocation issues. Because the previous two Gulf-wide summer surveys located large quantities of POP, the Plan Team questioned whether abundance estimation would be possible, as was done for capelin. Mike noted that the Acoustics Group does not yet have a target strength-to-length relationship for POP but hopes to develop one next year using data collected with a lowered transducer system. The summer survey will also estimate relative euphausiid abundance, which Sarah Gaichas noted would be very important for ecosystem considerations and forage fish assessments.

The Team discussed the ability to use echosounders on commercial vessels for surveying in the GOA. The Team noted that it would be useful to begin collecting data soon. Julie noted that the fleet has noticed much higher amounts of POP intermixed with pollock and that POP appears to be taking over traditional fishing grounds for pollock along the shelfbreak.

Proposed specifications

The Team reviewed the proposed specifications for 2010-2011 that are used to establish the proposed rule. Consistent with last year's approach, the Team is recommending a rollover of the actual specification set for 2010 for both 2010 and 2011 for the proposed rule.

The Team discussed other mortality column included this year for discussion of total removals. Recommendations were made for clarifying catch columns. The column on total catch should note that this is commercial catch (including discards) from the groundfish fisheries as reported by the Catch Accounting System (CAS). The Other Mortality column includes recreational catch, research catches, experimental fishing catches, etc. Column titles should be modified accordingly to clarify this. A source of unreported mortality which continues to be an issue is bycatch of groundfish in the halibut fishery, primarily demersal shelf rockfish, Pacific cod and skates.

Julie Bonney noted that reporting of total removals for ACL purposes may have some difficulties in consistent approach across different fisheries. Consideration must be given to ensure that double-counting is not occurring when catch has already taken off of the ABC or TAC. The Team discussed EFPs and the implications that total removal accounting under ACLs have on the ability to allow for EFPs. Research removals are another concern, noting that for sablefish the longline survey catches can represent a substantial proportion of the catch. Jeff Fujioka suggested that historical catch information be revised for inclusion in the assessment to account for these catches. Julie Bonney requested that it would be useful to educate the public regarding the impact of re-running the model to include these previously unaccounted for catches.

Organization for November meeting

The Team discussed SAFE report organization for this year as well as future years and made summary assignments for November for all Team members. Diana emailed these assignments to Team members following the meeting.

The Team recommends that when the shorttraker rockfish assessment uses an age-structured model it should be in a separate chapter.

The Team made several requests to assessment authors:

1. ABC apportionment information for summary tables should be included in the executive summary of the assessments. Rockfish chapters should be used as an example of the tables necessary in the assessment for use in the introduction.
2. Assessment authors should include the information needed to do the status determination criteria on an annual basis in their assessments.

For the November meeting, the Team requested that only essential assessment-related material be covered in order to allow the Team sufficient time for deliberations and assessment review. The Team requests that Pacific cod specifications should be done in separate Team deliberations even if the actual assessment reviews are done in joint session.

Tom Pearson will send 2009 catch by area and GOA-wide totals to all Team members one week before. Tom and Sarah will coordinate on the week-ending date for 2009 catch in order to estimate catches of other species for the same time frame.

Mike Dalton suggested including economic information on gross revenue change split-out by species. The Team recommended including this as a separate new section in the introduction.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45pm.